THE HARTFORD HERALD.

"I COME, THE HERALD OF A NOISY WORLD, THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS LUMBERING AT MY BACK."

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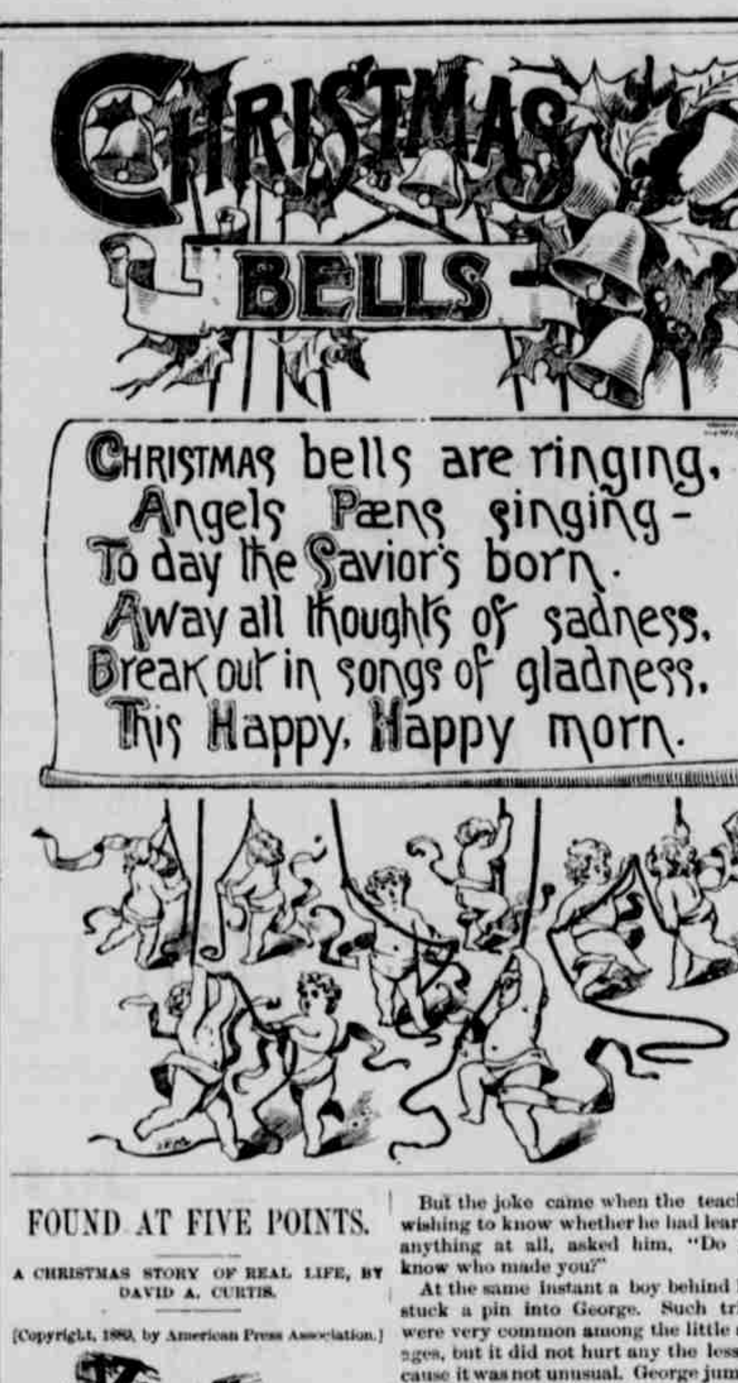

FOUND AT FIVE POINTS.

A CHRISTMAS STORY OF REAL LIFE, BY DAVID A. CURTIS.

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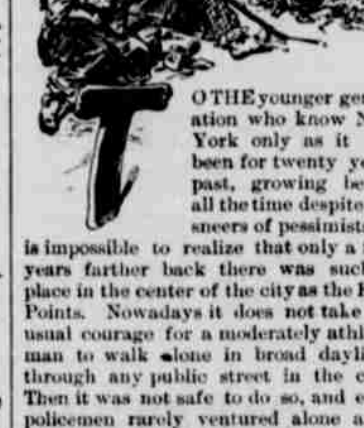


O THE younger generation who know New York only as it has been for twenty years past, growing better all the time despite the sneers of pessimists, it is impossible to realize that only a few years farther back there was such a place in the center of the city as the Five Points. Nowadays it does not take unusual courage for a moderately athletic man to walk alone in broad daylight through any public street in the city. Then it was not safe to do so, and even policemen rarely ventured alone after dark into the region known by the old name. Now the horse cars run through the center of it. Broad streets have been cut through, and old buildings replaced with new. Factories and stores stand where were formerly tumble down rookeries, that had stood since the last century, and that were swarming with the most degraded poor and the most desperate criminals. When the Rev. W. C. Van Meter, with a few friends as earnest and determined as himself, first started a mission school within the borders of this valley of the shadow of crime, he was repeatedly warned by the police of the dangers he incurred, and it was some time after the work was started before he dared to take, even under escort, in the middle of the day, the ladies who were anxious to aid by teaching in the school. It seems now like a story of a foreign land and another age, but I saw in 1854 or 1855 a party of a dozen ladies and gentlemen mobbed as they started homeward from the school one Sunday noon, hustled into the street and assailed with volleys of obscene oaths and rotten vegetables, and so beset by a horde of half drunken men and women that they were glad to escape with whole bones and ruined garments. And the police seemed powerless to prevent or punish such outrages, for this was no unusual occurrence.

The region about what is now Paradise square, for the distance of a couple of blocks in every direction, was honeycombed with blind alleys and secret passages, some of them running underground from one block to another. It was a city of refuge for criminals, and, though they warred and preyed upon one another with entire lawlessness, they combined as a unit to protect any one among them from the processes of the law. Aside from the criminals the population consisted almost entirely, if not quite so, of the poverty stricken, for dire poverty and desperate crime then, as very often in history, went hand in hand.

The children, who were coaxed one by one into the mission schoolroom, were a crowd of little savages. Their ignorance was something amazing. It was not very uncommon to find among them boys and girls of 6 or 7 years old who did not know their full names, but who stoutly declared that "Sally" or "Bill" was the only name they had, and once or twice children were found who actually did not know whether they had ever had fathers and mothers. Some had no homes. God only knows how they kept alive, for they slept in holes and corners, and fed like vagrant cats and dogs on whatever they could beg, find or steal. Impossible? Certainly it is, but it is true, nevertheless.

Among the wildest and shyest of all who came in was a boy who was the originator of at least one famous joke, though without intention. The teacher asked him his name and he said it was George. Being asked what his last name was he said that was his last name.

"But you must have another name," urged the teacher. "Is it George Smith, or George Johnson, or George What?"

"Nope," he said, shortly. "Taint George What, nor George Nothin', it's George. I hain't got no oder name."

But the joke came when the teacher, wishing to know whether he had learned anything at all, asked him, "Do you know who made you?"

At the same instant a boy behind him stuck a pin into George. Such tricks were very common among the little savages, but it did not hurt any the less because it was not unusual. George jumped from his seat and shouted at the top of his voice "Goddemitey."

"Well, that's right," said the teacher, who had not noticed the trick. "But don't shout so." The story was told afterwards, with enlargements, until it became a "chestnut" many years ago.

It was a long time—some months—before the teachers could learn much about the boy, for he was distrustful to the last degree. He kicked the Rev. Mr. Van Meter on the shins very violently, and twisted himself away like an eel when that gentleman, according to his habit, laid his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder. George thought he was going to be beaten, and took his usual precaution of eluding the preliminary hold. He had, it seemed, never known what it was to have anybody take hold of him in kindness, and was no more to be handled than a young bird or a squirrel. There was hardly anything, in fact, that he did know, as the good mission people reckoned knowledge. He knew how to swear fluently, as his accidentally correct answer as to his Maker indicated, but he did not know, and it was a long time before he could be made to understand, that swearing was wrong. In fact, he did not know what wrong was. So far as his experience of life went, everybody did precisely what seemed at the moment desirable to do, unless prevented by superior physical force, or by bodily fear. Stealing was to him a perfectly legitimate mode of acquiring anything that he might happen to want, and the only reason why it should be done secretly was that too much ostentation about the act was apt to provoke interference on the part of the owner, who might and probably would want the article himself. Lying was simply the easiest way of concealing anything that he did not care to reveal, and the only inkling he had of the objectionable character of the act was that anybody to whom he told a lie would beat him savagely if he did not lie cleverly enough to escape detection. As to the Sabbath, the first knowledge he had of the difference between one day and another came from his noticing that once in a while these people who had whole clothes on and who spoke gently came into the neighborhood and opened the little mission room and tried to get the children to go into it.

George was among those who were coaxed in with much difficulty, but after going once he went regularly. The room was clean and pleasant, and as the autumn days came on there was a stove put in and a fire made it warm. That was a novelty to him—being allowed to sit undisturbed in a warm room. The story the good teacher obtained from him after winning his confidence was appalling by its very absence of detail; but it was only one of many like stories, and she could do very little to alleviate the misery that was all around her.

George lived with a woman whom he had been taught to call Aunt Sally. Whether she was his aunt, who his

GEORGE JUMPED FROM HIS SEAT.

mother or father was, whether they were alive, or whether, indeed, he had ever had a mother or a father, were matters concerning which he absolutely knew nothing, even by hearsay. Aunt Sally was negatively good to him, it appeared. She did not beat him, excepting when she was drunk, which was, however, much of the time. She let him sleep in her room, and when she had food she gave him some. When she was drinking heavily she did not bother about eating, and George had learned, as young as he was, to keep away from her, and get his food for himself. How or when he got it, only God's ravens could have told. Such cases are not as common in New York as they were twenty-five or thirty years ago, but they are found now and again, even in these days. Who Aunt Sally was, or why she took any interest whatever in him, he knew nothing about. She was a fact, and her interest, faint though it was, was a fact, and he had not come to the age of reasoning about facts. He only recognized them.

One day—and it chanced to be Christmas eve—a lady and gentleman appeared in the little room as visitors. They had read of the mission work, the gentleman explained, and had come from their home in a nearby city to see it and to give what little help was in their power. There was a story back of it, but this story was not told till afterward. Their name was not Harrison, so I may call them that.

GEORGE LIVED WITH AUNT SALLY.

"My wife," said Mr. Harrison, "is painfully, almost morbidly, anxious to do everything she can for poor children, especially for orphans. And about Christmas time she seems especially nervous about it. There is a story about it, of course, but it is too long and too painful to tell now." This to Mr. Van Meter, whose earnestness in his chosen work made him rejoice in every new found friend, and whose enthusiasm was contagious.

Before long the story was known. Mrs. Harrison's father was a wealthy manufacturer, whose two daughters were the children of different mothers, and developed as they grew to womanhood strikingly different characteristics. The elder one, Sarah, was the daughter of his first wife, who had deserted him and her infant child to run away with one of his clerks. He knew little of her story after her flight, but in the course of a year and a half he learned that she had been forsaken by her lover and had plunged into such a terrible course of dissipation that death had been mercifully speedy in overtaking her. A year later he married the second time.

Again a daughter was born to him, and as the two children grew up they were treated, as nearly as possible, exactly alike. Everything that money could buy, or affection dictate, was at their command, and every influence of refinement and education was exerted to fit them for a high place in society, but whether it was some taint in the blood, or a morbid brooding over a mother's sin and shame, something led the elder daughter to turn away from good and seek evil from her early youth. The father sought in every way possible to avert the misery which he foresaw for himself and for her, but it was of no avail. A wayward youth was followed by utter recklessness as the unhappy girl became a woman. She still made her father's house her home, and would spend a large portion of her time there; but there were prolonged absences which the family strove in every way to conceal, and into which they dared not inquire closely for fear of shameful disclosures. The climax came in a peculiarly painful way. Among the gentlemen who visited at the house was Mr. Harrison, and it happened that, while the younger daughter was the one he sought in marriage, both the girls fell in love with him. Sarah's passion was none the less violent because of its lawless character and its utter hopelessness, and when she learned that her sister was to marry the man she herself loved, she left home finally, after a terrible scene in which she swore vengeance, defied all authority, and spurned the love of her father, mother and sister.

For three years nothing was heard of her. Her father, old before his time with sorrow, mourned for her truly, and would at any time have received her back with open arms, but no word came, and he knew too well the futility of trying to track her or to lure her home again. At last one evening she presented herself and demanded an interview, which was readily granted.

It was behind closed doors, and no one but the father ever knew just what passed between them. He told his wife and daughter, however, the substance of it. Sarah had demanded a portion of his fortune, and had offered for it to hide herself from him forever, to take another name and lead her own life in her own way.

"I told her," said the sorrowing man, "that she should always have a home with me, no matter when she came to claim it, and that I would never see her want for anything if she would come back to me, but that, if she persisted in the life she plainly said she proposed to live, I would do nothing for her before or after my death. And then she left me, saying it was forever, and cursing me—cursing me, her father, who even now would die for her if need be."

For a time after this nothing was heard of the prodigal. Then one Christmas eve she wreaked her hate, or vengeance, as she chose to call it, in an awful crime. Mrs. Harrison's only child, a boy not quite three years old, was in one of the public parks of the city, in charge of a nurse, when Sarah approached, and, by pretending a violent fancy for the child, threw the careless servant off her guard. Whether she bribed the girl, or really succeeded in tricking her, was never known, but it was two hours later when that frightened individual reported to Mrs. Harrison that her boy had been stolen.

It would be impossible to describe the agony of the parents, and useless to detail all the circumstances of the search that was made. The servant gave a sufficiently accurate description of the strange woman, whom she had never seen before, for the family to know who

SUCH A CHRISTMAS.

the kidnapper was, but Sarah had had a sufficient start to get on a train for New York, and all efforts to trace her were ineffectual. Had the newspapers even at that time learned the particulars of the story it would have become as famous as the Charlie Ross case, but the family shrank from the exposure that would have been inevitable, and though all the detective skill that could be procured was employed, no publication was made in the press.

Six years had passed from the day the boy was stolen when Mr. and Mrs. Harrison entered the little mission school in the Five Points. It was her own loss that had made her so peculiarly anxious to benefit poor children; but, though she was forever searching for her own little one, both she and her husband had almost given up the hope of ever finding him. While Mr. Harrison was talking with Mr. Van Meter, however, her eager eyes were scanning the faces of all the boys in the room.

Suddenly she turned pale. "Oh, George!" she said, or gasped, rather, and without another word she flew rather than ran to the other end of the room. Dropping on her knees in front of the poor little waif who had drifted in so strangely, she seized him with both hands and looked eagerly, almost wildly, into his eyes.

"What is your name?" she said to the startled child.

"George," he said.

"George what?"

"I dunno," he answered, beginning to cry, for he had developed a sensitiveness about his lack of a proper compliment of names, and, moreover, he was half frightened by the now frantic woman's strange behavior.

Suddenly she tore open his jacket and the poor, ragged shirt he had on, and looking on his breast found the birthmark she sought. Then, quick as a flash—the whole thing happened so quickly that it was over before her husband reached her side—she gathered him into her arms, dirt, rags and all, and kissed him until it seemed as if she were trying to devour him. Then, of course, she fainted.

It did not take long, though, for the other ladies in the room to bring her back to consciousness, and then such a scene as is rarely witnessed in this world put an end to anything like the usual order of exercises. Mr. Harrison was naturally a little slower than his wife to recognize the child, but only a little, and the bewildered boy was shortly embraced and kissed as few children in this world ever have been.

Such a prayer as Mr. Van Meter uttered, while the tears streamed down his cheeks and every person in the room dropped on his knees, has seldom been heard even from his eloquent lips, and in a few more minutes Mr. Harrison proposed to leave. It was obvious enough to him that he had to take his child home, but the good missionary was too well acquainted with the neighborhood to let him go unattended.

"You would be mobbed before you had gone a block, if the people saw you carrying away the child," he said, and it was presently arranged that a policeman should be summoned to escort the party up to Broadway, and a carriage should be taken there.

This was done as quickly as possible, for there was real danger of trouble if the news had been spread through the neighborhood before they got away. As it happened, however, all passed off quietly, and little George had seen such a Christmas as he had never dreamed of.

"Aunt Sally" was found, and every effort was made to induce her to reform. She consented to go home, but whether she remained there or not I do not know.

Sensational as anything in fiction, is it not? Yet, excepting in some few details, it is a true story.

THE COUNTRY BOYS,

Who go to the City and Win a Name in Journalism.

[Picador in Owensboro Messenger.]

A country boy has just met his reward in Louisville journalism, in the person of Robt. W. Brown, who, after five years of service as the city editor of the Courier-Journal, has been promoted to be managing editor of the Evening Times. Mr. Brown is the son of a Methodist minister and spent his life in the country until he was about 20 years old. Six years ago he was a reporter on a little weakling paper in Jeffersonville, and one day he was called upon to do the work of one of the reporters on a Louisville paper. It was a slight opportunity, but that is all real ability ever asks. The excellence of his work was recognized instantly, even in the suburban notes he sent in, and in less than a week he was engaged on the staff and transferred to Louisville. He was an indomnitable worker, with legs that never tired and fertility of resource and closeness of observation that only required development. He developed them in about a year, and has since been recognized as the best executive city editor that the Louisville press ever had. He never seemed to sleep; he apparently had no thought except for his paper and his profession, and he is amiable, active and sympathetic with his force. He is about 26 or 27 years old and his ability is peculiar and unusual. He is not considered a "fine writer," although he writes easily, lucidly and has successfully done all character of newspaper work. His fort is knowing news, how to get it, how much it is worth and how to print it. He has never had a superior in this line of journalism in the West, and this faculty united to ambition and industry will one day make him famous. In the meantime Col. Emmet Logan has returned to his cabbage beds and onion patch in the country whence he came. But he will not stay there. And for good reasons. He is NOT a farmer and he IS a newspaper man. The Times is to become a six-page paper in a few days and will be printed on the new $50,000 press which is being placed in the cellar of the Courier-Journal establishment. This will be the finest piece of printing mechanism in the South and will attract much curiosity.

Plaster of Paris Flooring.

[Washington Star.]

Plaster of Paris can now be rendered hard enough to be used for flooring purposes by means of a process recently communicated by the French Academy of Science. The plaster is mixed with one-sixth of its weight of freshly slacked lime of good quality, and this mixture worked and applied with as little water as possible. After it has thoroughly dried it is treated with a strong solution of iron sulphate, which, gradually oridizing, leaves the floor impregnated with a yellow colored substance which develops a fine imitation of mahogany under an application of linseed oil.

Took Him at His Word.

[Pick Me Up.]

Indignant Passenger (to omnibus conductor)—Please understand, sir, that you are paid to answer questions, and not to ask them. Tell me when we have passed Southampton street.

Conductor (ten minutes later)—We have passed Southampton street now, mum. It's about three quarters of a mile back, on the left hand side.

Since 1880 the mortgages on the farm land of the state of Illinois have increased from $103,525,237 to $123,733,098. This is an increase of 23 per cent., which is more than double the increase in the farming lands themselves. The Illinois farmers seem to be getting fat under high tariff.

How He Would Slide.

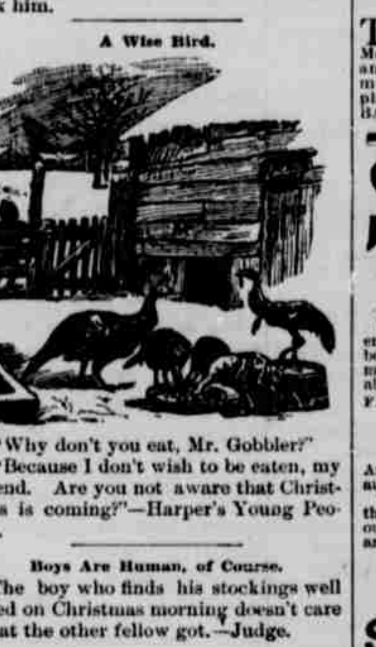
Mrs. Smitem (to her son)—Which would you rather have for Christmas, Robbie, a pair of skates or a sled?

Robbie—Can't I have both?

Mrs. Smitem—No, I don't think Santa Claus would consent to that.

Robbie—Then give me the skates. Tommy Slimson's got a sled, and I can lick him.

A Wise Bird.



"Why don't you eat, Mr. Gobbler?"

"Because I don't wish to be eaten, my friend. Are you not aware that Christmas is coming?"—Harper's Young People.

Boys Are Human, of Course.

The boy who finds his stockings well filled on Christmas morning doesn't care what the other fellow got.—Judge.

A Moneyless Christmas.

A Christmas without spending money! Midwinter holidays without dolls or picture books, tops, toy cannon or jumping jacks, colored candies or any "store presents" of any kind whatsoever! Christ's nativity celebrated without a Christmas tree or a Christmas carol or a gathering of the children—no evergreen shrub sparkling with glass, no Santa Claus and no pantomime. Could such a thing be in a Christian land?

Yea, verily.

And it is not so very long ago that just such a Christmas was the rule in three-fourths of the United States—nay, it is the rule now in considerable sections where there are no large towns. So easily do we get accustomed to what is, and so naturally do children believe that the system they first noticed has always been the system, that most people do not know, and even the older ones are forgetting, that the Christmas of to day is comparatively a new thing.

But what was the old time Christmas, and with what sights and sounds was it ushered in? Well, in the first place, it was—in all the rural regions at any rate—a time when no money could be "wasted." Children must have their fun without extra expense, save as each child had carefully saved his pennies. As to deliberately handing out a half dollar to a boy for Christmas—the average father would as soon have thought of giving him a deed for the farm. It was a season for rabbit hunting and sledding if there was snow enough, and for sliding if there was ice, for a good dinner and an extra piece of pie, and then, perhaps, for some home made presents.

A little later toys began to come in—say about 1850—in the central west, and such toys! Blocky horses, square cornered cows, dogs made of clay and burnt black in the fire, and so forth and so forth; a collection of them now would throw a group of children into convulsions of laughter. Be it remembered that less than fifty years ago Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis were the only cities really known to the great mass of people living west of Ohio and north of Tennessee, and nine-tenths of the people under 20 years of age had never seen a city of 10,000 inhabitants. And in those days rural America celebrated Christmas literally without money and without (cash) price.

Plenty of people who do not like to be called old can recall the time when, in all the book stores of the rural regions, only two or three kinds of "story books" could be found, and as to holiday books and holiday goods as such—well, they could be found in the cities, probably, but not one child in a hundred, taking the country through, ever saw one of them.

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